

degree. Here, then, is the zone in which all means for education are at command, as well as for the gratification of the tastes which it ought to awaken if it possessed vitality. The spirit of exclusiveness here exercises its baneful influence; and the noble birth, which, according to its views, is an honour for which there is no equivalent, must also collect around it those aristocratic old paintings which boast a long line of ancestry,—we mean, with all respect, the venerable masters of antiquity, from whom they have been supposed to trace their descent.*

W. CAVE THOMAS.

CARVINGS OF STALLS IN CATHEDRALS AND COLLEGIATE CHURCHES.†

AMONG the many objects which have attracted attention, we may reckon among the more curious the remains of the old sculptured stalls, or, as they are technically termed, misericords or misericordes, which are found almost universally in cathedral and collegiate churches, but of which, unfortunately, the number preserved in that of Worcester is very small. A few slight and passing observations on these interesting monuments of mediæval art, of which a very curious series is also preserved in the church of Great Malvern, may not, perhaps, be totally uninteresting.

The sculptures range in date from the thirteenth century to the Reformation, and are distinguished by various degrees of excellence. Sometimes they are very rude, but more commonly, like the illuminations in some manuscripts, they possess a considerable share of artistic skill. They are found on the continent as well as in England, and the general character of the subjects is so uniform, that we might almost suppose that the carvers throughout Europe possessed one regular and acknowledged series of working patterns. Yet there is a great variety in the detail of the subjects, and in the manner of treating them. Writers of vivid imaginations have given them no less a variety of interpretations. Some have conceived them to be satirical attacks aimed by the monks at one another, or at the secular clergy; whilst others have imagined that these strange and grotesque figures embodied in allegorical form the deepest mysteries of our holy faith. Each of these opinions was equally far from the truth. In all probability neither the designers nor the carvers were monks, although it is evident they were men of a certain degree of education, and well acquainted with the popular literature of the day, the different classes of which are here represented in a pictorial form.

One of the most popular branches of this popular literature was the science of natural history, in the shape it was then taught. The treatises on this subject were designated by the general title of *bestiaries* (*bestiaria*), or books of beasts. They contained a singular mixture of fable and truth, and the animals with which we are acquainted in our ordinary experience stood side by side with monsters of the most extraordinary kind. The accounts even of the more common and well-known animals (reproduced largely on the domain of the imagination, and therefore much more extraordinary) were the fables relating to those of a doubtful or of an entirely fabulous character. I may mention, as an example, the unicorn—according to mediæval fable, the fiercest and most uncontrollable of beasts. A stratagem, we are told, was necessary to capture the unicorn. A beautiful virgin, of spotless virtue, was taken to the forest which this animal frequented. The unicorn, tame only in the presence of a pure virgin, came immediately and laid its head gently and without fear in the maiden's lap. The hunter then approached and struck his prey with a mortal blow, before it had time to awake from its security. A more popular character was given to these stories by the adjunction of moralizations, somewhat resembling those which are found at the end of the fables of Æsop. The mysterious power of the maiden over the unicorn, the resurrection of the phoenix, the generous nobleness of the lion, the craftiness of the fox, the maternal tenderness of the pelican, are capable of a multitude of mystical interpretations.

The bestiaries, of all ages, are more universally illustrated with pictures than any other book: they seem to have contained the first science to be instilled into the youthful mind. Every one who has been in the habit of examining the sculptured stalls of which we are speaking knows that the stories of the bestiaries are among the most common representations. I have to send you no great distance hence to shew you, on the very interesting stalls in the church of Stratford-upon-Avon, the story of the maiden and the unicorn, the latter being made a more cruel sacrifice to the hunter after having fallen a victim to the charms of beauty. The pelican, the elephant, the lion, and the more ignoble monkey, have their place on the stalls of Gloucester. The fabulous objects of the natural history of the middle ages—dragons, chimeras, griffins, and the like, are much more numerous. The syren is seen on the stalls of Great Malvern.

Next after the bestiaries, the most popular books of the middle ages—books which were pictorially illustrated with equal profusion, were the collections of European fables, known under the titles of *Ysopets* and *Avenets*, from the names of the celebrated fabulists Æsop and Avienus. With these was intimately connected the large romantic or rather satiric cycle of the history of Renard the Fox, which enjoyed an extraordinary degree of popularity from the twelfth century to the nineteenth. The fables and the romance of Renard are frequently represented on the stalls. The fable of the rats hanging the cat is represented in a carving on the stalls of Great Malvern. The man and the ass, the fox carrying away the goose, and one or two other similar subjects, are found at Gloucester. The fox preaching is found on one of the side ornaments of a stall carving in Worcester cathedral, and is not of unfrequent occurrence elsewhere.

Another class of literature, frequently accompanied with pictorial illustrations in the manuscripts, comprises the calendars or ecclesiastical almanacks, in which the domestic or agricultural employments of each month are pictured at the top or in the margin of the page. Such subjects are extremely frequent in the carved stalls. Three stalls in the cathedral of this city represent men employed in mowing, reaping, and sheaving the corn. Another represents the swineherd feeding his pigs, by beating down the acorns from the trees. This last is a very common subject. Scenes of hunting or hawking are also frequently met with. The stall carver has given a still wider range to his imagination in representing domestic scenes, which are very frequent, and very interesting for the light they throw on the popular manners of our forefathers in far distant times. A very curious example may be cited from the cathedral of Worcester, which represents a domestic winter scene. A man closely wrapped up is seated beside a fire, stirring his pot—his gloves, which are remarkable for being two-fingered, as well as the expression of his features, show that he is suffering severely from the temperature. He has taken off his boots, and warms his feet by a rather close approximation to the fire. All the details of the picture are equally curious—even to the side ornaments, one of which represents two slices of bacon, the winter's provision, suspended to a hook, while on the other a rather gigantic cat is basking in the warmth of the chimney. On a stall in Minster Church, in the Isle of Thanet, an old woman—a witch-like figure, is occupied at her distaff, accompanied by two cats of grotesque appearance. One of the stalls at Great Malvern represents a man at his dinner. Another in the same church exhibits a woman in bed, attended by a physician. Others of this class are more grotesque and playful, representing games and pastimes, and practical jokes, not always restrained within the bounds of the delicacy of modern times. Monks and nuns sometimes appear in scenes of this description, of which some curious examples are furnished by the stalls in Hereford Cathedral.

It is remarkable, and especially characteristic of these carvings, that scriptural or religious subjects are very rare. An example of a saint's legend occurs in the representation of the story of St. George and the Dragon, on a stall at Stratford-upon-Avon, the side ornaments to which are not very congruous grotesques. The stories of the great mediæval

romances also find a place in these representations. A foreign example represents the fabulous Aristotle subdued by the charms of his patron's wife—the subject of a well known poem—the *lai d'Aristote*. A stall at Gloucester, no doubt taken from one of the old *romans de geste*, represents a knight in combat with a giant. Subjects that may be considered as strictly allegorical are also rare; perhaps the figure of a naked man enveloped in a net, with a hare under his arm, and riding on a goat, in the stalls of Worcester Cathedral, may be considered as belonging to this class. A figure of a fool riding on a goat occurs on the stalls at Gloucester. The subjects most commonly supposed to be of this allegorical character are mere grotesques copied from those fantastic sketches so often found in the margins of manuscripts of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries.

My object in thus comparing the carvings on the stalls with the illuminations of manuscripts, and with subjects of mediæval popular literature, is not only to show how easily the subjects peculiar to other stalls are to be accounted for, but to impress on the minds of archaeologists the necessity of extending the field of their inquiries beyond the immediate limits within which the particular subject under consideration appears at first sight to be contained. An extensive study of the literature of the middle ages is necessary to the understanding of its objects of art, and, indeed, of all its monuments, as much as for its history. The sculptured stalls, besides their value for the study of manners and costume, form also a practical illustration of the kind of scientific and literary information possessed by society at large. It was restricted to the bestiaries and the fables, with a less extensive acquaintance with the romances of chivalry.

THOMAS WRIGHT.

DISTRICT SURVEYORS' CHARGES. AWARD OF OFFICIAL REFEREES.

WITH regard to certain fees charged by the surveyor of the district of Lewisham for certain building operations by Mr. W. H. Whitte, Albert-road, Sydenham, it appeared that a "stable, patients' room, and surgery had been built at the same time, but after the dwelling-house to which they belong had been finished," and had then been connected with the house by a corridor or passage. Notice relative to the stable was given on 2nd February, and the works were finished on 20th March; the notice for the passage was on the 10th of March, and the works finished on the 29th of the same month. The district surveyor contended that the stable, surgery, &c. could not belong to the dwelling-house class, being part used as a stable, and that the passage, as an addition to the dwelling-house, was a distinct work.

He therefore charged—

Fee of second-class fourth-rate building (stable, &c.)	£2 2 0
Fee of addition to first-class second-rate building	1 10 0
	£3 12 0

The owner had also put up a forcing pit for plants about 10 feet square on plan, and 6 feet high on one side, and 2 feet 6 inches high on the opposite side, with a stove and flue; "and the district surveyor stated that the said erection is not a building expressly assigned by the said act first herein mentioned to any class and rate, and that therefore he had, under the provisions of the eighth section of the said act, assigned the same to the fourth-rate of the second-class;" and for this he charged 1*l.* 1*s.*, as "reduced fee."

The referees determined, "first, with regard to the said stable, surgery, patients' room and corridor, that the same constitute one building only belonging to the said dwelling-house, and attached thereto by means of the said corridor, and to be distinctly rated as a building of the second-rate of the first-class, and that only one fee is chargeable by the district surveyor for the supervision thereof, namely, such fee as is by the said Act first herein mentioned imposed in respect of additions to, or alterations of, buildings of the rate to which such attached

* To be continued.

† Read at the Worcester meeting of the Archaeological Association.